

October 4, 2001

Statement by Edward J. Markey Calling for Screening of All Checked Baggage to Bolster Airline Security

Thank you, Jay, for helping us to frame this important debate. On September 11th our country suffered the greatest loss of life on American soil in a single day. These terrorist attacks that ripped through the World Trade Center and Pentagon buildings are our sad reminder that we are susceptible to breaches of security in our airports and on our airplanes. These attacks force us to think about our safety and security in new and more creative ways. We must out-imagine and out-think those people who are incapable of accepting the American way of life and the freedoms and liberties that come along with that.

These most unfortunate attacks originated out of my home state airport, Logan International Airport. So we have a special interest in Massachusetts to make sure that our citizens are safe from the multiplicity of terrorist threats that exist. However, the technology also exists to protect us, but in some cases, it is not even deployed. In Europe, all airports have moved in the direction of full baggage screening, using multiple layers of security. We are too far behind in America.

This measure that we are calling for now, full screening of all checked baggage is an important first step towards implementing better security measures on all transportation. There are technologies that have been developed in Massachusetts that would economically screen all baggage for the explosive devices and weapons. There are facial screeners that would enhance law enforcement's ability to pick up terrorist suspects as they enter airports.

Like a cat looking to guard all the mouse holes, we must be vigilant. But we must also understand that the mouse is always gnawing new holes in the walls. These holes are security lapses at smaller airports; the need for better coordination among law enforcement to recognize terrorist threats as they buy tickets and enter airports; and the need to reexamine all types of public conveyance, not just air transportation. We not only must get the terrorists, but we must repair the holes that now exist in our security systems.

Thank you, again Jay, for your leadership on this important issue.

<http://www.house.gov/markey>